

NPR Transcript:

Washington Using More Private Military Contractors Rather than Military Troops at Overseas Trouble Spots

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by DAVID BROWN - anchor:

Order is collapsing and violence is increasing in **Sudan**, pushing the country to the brink of chaos. The United Nations issued that warning last night for the country's Darfur region, where more than 1.6 million people have been driven from their homes by civil war. US troops will not be going in to help anytime soon, but Washington is sending over private military contractors. As Eric **Niiler** reports, this reflects an important shift.

ERIC **NIILER** reporting:

Whenever US troops head overseas, they're usually followed by private military contractors, who provide everything from air conditioned tents to computer tech support. Increasingly, though, private contractors are becoming the first and only US boots on the ground; that's especially true in Africa, where just the presence of US troops could make the situation even worse. Using private contractors is a way for the US government to keep a regional conflict at arm's length while still keeping a hand in the outcome. The US State Department has hired two American companies: DynCorp, based in Reston, Virginia, and PAE from Los Angeles. Ed Mueller supervises Africa contracts for the State Department.

Mr. ED MUELLER (State Department): Basically, we're using contractors for logistics support,

for peacekeeping operations.

NIILER: In Africa, DynCorp and PAE are flying 3,000 African Union troops to **Sudan**, fitting their uniforms, setting up their tents and driving them around in trucks. The soldiers have to bring their own weapons. This arrangement occasionally puts the contractors on opposite sides in **Sudan**

. While DynCorp is helping with peacekeeping operations, it also has a separate State Department deal to support a coalition of Sudanese rebel groups called the National Democratic Alliance. State Department's Mueller explains.

Mr. MUELLER: We provide advice and assistance for them at the negotiation table. We fund what amounts to diplomatic representation. We fund offices in Ismailia, Nairobi, Cairo and Washington, DC.

NIILER: Since 2001, the State Department has given this group nearly \$16 million. That money has passed through a DynCorp subsidiary before going to the rebels.

Mr. MUELLER: DynCorp acts as our agent to ensure that US assistance goes for its intended purposes.

NIILER: DynCorp's partner, PAE, also runs a human rights monitoring team in **Sudan**. PAE's job is to fly these observers around the country to talk to villagers who have been attacked. So in **Sudan**, US contractors are supporting peacekeeping troops, human rights monitors and the rebels that are blamed for some of the violence. One expert says this highlights some of the risks of turning foreign policy over to private companies. Peter W. Singer is a fellow at The Brookings Institution and author of "Corporate Warriors."

Mr. PETER W. SINGER (The Brookings Institution; Author, "Corporate Warriors"): When you outsource, you're deferring some of your control over it. You have all the business challenges of doing it right. And it's also an indicator that, to be blunt, you don't care enough to do it yourself.

NIILER: Supporters say there are benefits to turning over dangerous jobs to private enterprise. Doug Brooks is president of the International Peace Operations Association, which represents contractors in Washington. He says these firms are faster, cheaper and more politically acceptable than the US military.

Mr. DOUG BROOKS (President, International Peace Operations Association): The reality, though, I mean, right now in Darfur is if you weren't using private companies, there wouldn't be anybody going at all. There's just nobody prepared to do it.

NIILER: But critics on Capitol Hill wonder why the same companies keep getting these lucrative jobs. In the past DynCorp employees have been accused of running a child sex ring in Bosnia and engaging in paramilitary activity in Columbia, all the while being paid by US taxpayers. PAE has been accused of overbilling the United Nations for an African contract in 2001. Democratic Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky of Illinois says she has asked the State Department to provide details about DynCorp's previous deals but gotten nowhere.

Representative JAN SCHAKOWSKY (Democrat, Illinois): We're often told that this is proprietary information. It's very hard for even members of Congress to be able to get a look at those contracts and find out what they're supposed to be doing.

NIILER: Representatives of DynCorp and PAE would not talk to MARKETPLACE. State Department's Mueller said the earlier troubles are not relevant to the firms' current work in **Sudan**

. Officials say the size of the peacekeeping contracts will likely grow as conditions there get even worse. And if that's not enough work, the Bush administration is preparing to offer a \$7 billion contract to deliver AIDS drugs to Africa. In Washington, I'm Eric

Niiler
for MARKETPLACE.

BROWN: Coming up, going out in style.

Mr. JOE DISPENZA (Forest Lawn Cemetery): Why do people do it? It's as much as, 'I like it, I want it and I can.' Why do people shop Fifth Avenue and some people shop Wal-Mart?

